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SUBJECT: GERMAN VIEWS ON STRENGTHENING IRAN SANCTIONS

Classified By: Acting Political Section Chief Stan Otto for reasons 1.4
(C) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary. During a friendly and frank discussion of Iran that the Ambassador hosted in honor of Dr. Condoleezza Rice on October 6, German parliamentarians, Chancellery and MFA officials, and senior think-tank researchers agreed that the international community was approaching an "end game" with Iran regarding its nuclear program. German officials are now hearing support for further sanctions coming from regime opponents within Iran. However, the participants disagreed on what the most effective strategy is for halting Iran's development of a nuclear weapon, given the questionable ability of the UN or EU to agree on sanctions. End Summary.

¶2. (C) MFA State Secretary Silberberg saw three potential areas for sanctions: transport, financial, and energy. In any case, German law requires a UNSCR or an EU decision, both of which will be difficult to gain. NSA Heusgen questioned whether Russia would support a UNSC sanctions resolution. He appeared uncertain of whether the new, harder Russian tone toward Iran was a "real change or simply new tactics." He thought that if Russian support was real, China likely would follow the Russian lead. In the EU, Italy especially but also Cyprus and Greece are difficult to bring along in a sanctions decision, according to Silberberg. However, he thought that "sanctions may work."

¶3. (C) Director of the German Institute for Security Affairs (SWP) Perthes argued that sanctions rarely work unless they impact directly the policy area they seek to influence. In this case, to achieve a change in military policy, sanctions have to hit the military sector. Specifically, an arms embargo could work, but as the supplier of most Iranian conventional arms, Russia is unlikely to agree to a total arms embargo. In response, Rice expressed her hope that the international community would consider a limited arms embargo.

¶4. (C) Silberberg also shared that factions within the Iranian leadership opposed to the president want sanctions in the hope that this will weaken the president's position. This is a new message, and underscores the notion that the regime is now brittle. Perhaps sanctions could in this case weaken the existing regime, he suggested.
Murphy